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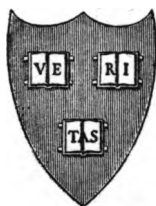
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# THE STRUGGLE FOR JUSTICE

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LOUIS WALLIS



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# THE STRUGGLE FOR JUSTICE c 17

*By*  
**LOUIS WALLIS**  
*Author of Sociological Study of the Bible*



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**TO  
WILLIAM F. COCHRAN  
WHOSE INTEREST IN THE SOCIAL VALUE  
OF THE GOSPEL HAS MADE POSSIBLE  
THE PUBLICATION OF THIS BOOK**





## FOREWORD

Two great movements are uniting in our day, like two rivers flowing together to form a larger stream—the social awakening and the modern, scientific interpretation of religion and the Bible.

At first glance, it seems as if there can be no relation between academic scholarship and our new search for social justice. Yet these movements have an extremely intimate and vital connection, which comes into view as we go behind the scenes and carefully observe the working of the forces that control the evolution of human society.

The main thought of this little book has been expressed more technically and at greater length in the writer's earlier volume, entitled *Sociological Study of the Bible*. The friendly reception given to that work has suggested this briefer presentation.



## JUSTICE AND RELIGION

Let justice roll down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream.—Amos 5:24.

The world today is moving between the urgency of two extremes. On the one hand are those who would have us leave all things as they are. On the other hand, the apostle of violence would shatter the physical fabric of civilization with high-power explosives.

The world will adopt neither of these alternatives. It will not stand still and preserve the *status quo*; nor will it follow the lead of the dynamiter. But it will presently discover that the call of the future is along the path of moderation.

Middle ground is the public destiny—not mere compromise, which settles nothing, but the genuine adjustment between conflicting interests which recognizes the inherent claims of all human beings and results in justice. For that is the real nature of justice: an adjustment which weighs all factors and which inclines toward the exclusive claim of no single class or interest.

Justice is not a thing to be laid hold of suddenly; nor is it handed out from the clouds. It

is a gradual discovery. Various fractions of justice have been realized through the struggles of the past. The time was when arbitrary theories of government ruled the world. The masses of men were controlled by a specially privileged upper class. But one privilege after another has been abolished. Divine kingly right and absolute rule have given way to representative democracy and popular legislation; chattel slavery has been wiped out; women are being emancipated; and so the process goes on. Justice comes not abruptly. Its dawn is gradual; and we are yet living in its morning hour.

The struggle for justice grips the feelings and appeals to the heart. It is a religious matter. The power of religion broke the tyranny of the Stuarts in Britain and the manacles of the slave in America. What is more, the modern school of scientific biblical interpretation is helping us to see that the book which all our churches venerate as holy has grown out of the first great victory over injustice in the history of the world. The struggle among the Hebrews for the worship of the One God, as opposed to the cults of the many gods, was not a mere theological contest between certain wise people who served a real God and certain foolish people who served unreal gods. It was a warfare between the principles of justice

and injustice. This startling truth has only begun to be realized in religious circles. The rise of monotheism and the downfall of polytheism spelled the triumph of the plain people over aristocracy.

This is the fundamental meaning of the revolution which is now sweeping over theological seminaries and churches. At once dreaded and welcomed, modern biblical scholarship sets the struggle for justice in its true historical perspective. Not only did Amos and his fellow-prophets cry, "Let justice roll down as waters"; but this was to be the work of the Messiah himself, as foreshadowed in the utmost visions of exalted prophecy:

He shall bring forth justice to the nations.

He shall not fail nor be discouraged

Till he have set justice in the earth;

And the isles shall wait for his law [Isa., chap. 42].

Three chapters have been thus far disclosed in the evolution of biblical religion: first, the struggle among the Hebrews for the worship of One God as against the worship of many gods—ending in the victory of monotheism; secondly, the struggle, which has cut through Jewish, Roman, and Protestant churches alike, over the question *how* the One God should be worshiped—ending in the victory of justice and morality over

dogma and ritual as the foundations of religion; thirdly, the new struggle, upon which we are now entering, with reference to the nature of justice itself—whether it be “social” or “individual.”

The social gospel carries with it the suggestion that we need something more than a merely “personal” salvation. It raises opposition to the older and more familiar thought, emphasized by the religion of our ancestors, that individual righteousness alone will save the world. It is against the old, narrow, selfish gospel of “individualism,” which reigned supreme a generation ago, both within and without the church. The social awakening, therefore, is a movement involving tremendous possibilities in the field of religion.

Within recent years, the people have more and more turned away from the church because it has been identified with a platform which has failed to meet the increasing pressure of our time. The church has denounced the shortcomings of men in their private lives; but it has not flamed with high enthusiasm for the righting of social wrongs.

In the meanwhile, however, the church has gradually become conscious that religion has been presented in too narrow a form, and that the Bible has a deep sociological meaning which has not hitherto been fathomed. As a consequence,

the churches are now being drawn into the tide of a new revival; and they are becoming community centers instead of arenas for theological controversy.

In the degree that the church broadens its appeal, reaching back to the fulness of its biblical foundation, and emphasizing the neglected social aspect of the gospel—in the degree that it does this, it is again winning popular attention and sympathy. For the people are “incurably” religious.

When we hear, for the first time, that the victory of biblical monotheism over the worship of many gods was the first great triumph of democracy over aristocracy and injustice, we exclaim, “But how can that be? The Bible is concerned only with *religion!*” We have, indeed, been trained so long to think of religion as a ghostly, unearthly matter, that the real meaning of the Bible has been obscured, and we have turned away with unseeing eyes from the most thrilling chapters of human experience.

If the religion of the Bible has this public, social meaning, then the church truly has within itself the seeds of the redemption of mankind. Sociological interpretation of the Bible gives us a key to religious history from ancient times up to the present epoch of struggle and unrest. The



**“orthodoxy” of the last generation is increasingly discredited. And while the new biblical scholarship has been thus far shut up in the schools, it is now passing out of the academic field and taking root in the soil of popular thought.**

## JUSTICE *VERSUS* HEATHENISM

The struggle for justice among the Hebrew people grew out of the peculiar circumstances of their national evolution. Like all races that have accomplished much on the field of history, the Hebrews came into existence at the point of contact and assimilation between earlier races which disappeared in the process.

These parent races were chiefly two—the Israelite clans which emerged from the desert of Arabia, and the earlier Amorite inhabitants of Canaan. The ancient Hebrew Books of Judges and Samuel show us that the Israelites occupied the highlands of Judah, Ephraim, and Gilead, leaving the Amorites in possession of many walled cities in the lowlands and valleys. The two races at length united under the house of David, and lost their identities in the new, composite, Hebrew nation. The unique religious development of the Hebrew nation is directly traceable to the conflict of social usages inherited from the Israelites and from the Amorites respectively. Let us, then, examine briefly the ideas and institutions pertaining to these earlier, parent races.

## THE ISRAELITES

Before invading the land of Canaan the Israelites were a nomadic, or wandering, people, whose home was in the wilderness of Arabia. Their life was very similar to that of the roving Arabs of the present day. Nomadic people are much alike the world over. The same fundamental conditions lie at the basis of unsettled society everywhere.

As a rule, each wandering group is restricted, or limited, to a certain area, within which its migrations are confined. It cannot move unchallenged outside this district, and its possession may even be disputed by some stronger tribe. The migratory community, then, has its own portion of the earth's surface, which is regarded as its home land. Every Arab tribe has its recognized wandering-ground and cannot leave its territory without incurring the penalty of war. It was the same among the American Indians before the coming of the English. Certain tribes inhabited Massachusetts; others roamed in Michigan; some lived in Alabama; others in Iowa; and so on. The United States today is largely covered with Indian names coming down from the nomadic period of social evolution.

Bearing these facts in mind, we are prepared to see that in all unsettled social groups there is no

private, or individual, ownership of *land*, such as there is in stationary communities. The migratory social group, as a whole, is regarded as the corporate owner of the district over which it roams in search of subsistence. Each group has to maintain itself in the best possible fighting trim, so as to be able to withstand the attacks of hostile neighbors. Every man of the tribe has an equal right with every other man to what their own district yields in support of life.

This condition of justice and brotherhood prevails among wandering races all over the world. There are no upper and lower social classes, in our sense of the word, among nomadic peoples. They have no problem of rich and poor. The tribes of the Arabian wilderness today, for instance, are described as follows by Doughty, an English physician who lived and traveled among them, and knew their ways of thought:

The nomad tribes we have seen to be commonwealths of brethren. They divide each other's losses. The malicious subtlety of interest [on money] is foreign to the brotherly dealing of the nomad tribesmen. Their *justice* is such that in the opinion of the next governed countries the Arabs of the wilderness are the justest of mortals. Seldom the judges and elders err, in these small societies of kindred, where the life of every tribesman lies open from his infancy and his state is to all men well known.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Arabia Deserta*, I, 249, 318, 345.

The great ideal of the wandering social community, then, is that of justice and brotherhood. This ideal, to be sure, is rather narrow, and applies at first only to each clan, tribe, or people by itself. We find that all the so-called "lower" races of the world are kinder, within the limits of their own communities, than are people of more sophisticated and civilized ways of life. Our word "kind," in fact, is derived from the same root as the word "kindred." The life of primitive men everywhere emphasizes justice, brotherhood, kindness, kinship. The ancestors of all nations were wanderers. Thus come into view the original ideas and usages that underlie the common life of humanity, controlling the most powerful springs of action.

The Israelites emerge from the Arabian wilderness into biblical history with the marks of their primitive nomadism strong upon them. As in the case of all primitive and ancient peoples, religion was a close and intimate part of their life. To use a modern expression, church and state were one and the same in the Israelite community. We who have grown up in a social order which recognizes the principle of separation between church and state find it difficult to grasp the full meaning of the ancient union of religion and life. It meant, in brief, that religion was the reflection,

or mirror, of the conventional usages and views of society. To recognize, worship, or swear by the god of a tribe or nation was the same as assenting to the social ideas and usages of that particular community.

Carrying these facts with us, we are now prepared to take another important step. The Israelites in the Arabian desert worshiped a deity whose name is given in modern English Bibles as "Jehovah." The real name itself is very different from this, and we find the first syllable of it in Ps. 68, thus: "His name is Yah." The same syllable occurs in the well-known Hebrew word *hallelu-jah*, which means "Give praise to Yah." It is also found in the names of hundreds of important characters in biblical history, such as Isaiah, Elijah, Josiah, Hezekiah, Jeremiah, etc. The full name of this ancient Israelite deity is "Yahweh."

We can hardly emphasize too strongly that the early religion of Yahweh, as reflected in the writings of such men as Amos, the shepherd of the Judean wilderness, was a very simple matter. The whole message of Amos can be condensed into the well-known exhortation "Let justice roll down as waters" (Amos 5:24). Another highland prophet says, "What doth Yahweh require of thee, but to do justice, and to love kindness,

and to walk humbly with thy god?" (Mic. 6:8). This early religion was not a theological, or doctrinal, matter at all. No primitive religion is ever theological, in the modern sense of that word. Yahweh was worshiped as the protector of the tribal brotherhood and the god of popular justice and morality. The influence of the prehistoric, tribal usages appears in the Bible in the frequent denunciation of interest on money, foreclosure of mortgages with adding of house to house and field to field, and also in the tradition that Yahweh had given the *land* of Canaan to the Israelites to be held in their families forever as a fixed possession that should not be sold. Amos and the other prophets appeal to the fundamental law of brotherhood-justice which derives its force from the primitive clan conscience. They do not base their authority upon the so-called "Laws of Moses," for the reason that these laws, as now found in their present shape in the Bible, were not current during early Hebrew history.

#### THE AMORITES

Carrying with us these important considerations, and holding them in full view, let us turn to the other main branch of Hebrew ancestry. We now enter a different world, which is very unlike that of the nomadic tribe. The Amorites,

having lived in the land of Canaan for many generations before the coming of the Israelites, occupied the crossroads of the trade routes in ancient oriental civilization. Lying between the Egyptian empire on the one side and the Babylonian empire on the other, these Amorites had long ago left the nomadic life behind, and were firmly settled in their walled cities and neighboring country villages.

The social system of the Amorites had but little in common with that of the invading Israelites. Like the Egyptians, Babylonians, Phoenicians, and other settled peoples of the ancient world, the Amorites had already reduced land to the category of private, individual property, subject to sale and exchange. They had a wealthy upper class and a poor lower class. They not only followed agriculture, but they were commercialistic and capitalistic. Their laws recognized the institution of human slavery. Their economic usages included the circulation of money, the making of loans at interest on real estate, and the foreclosure of the mortgage when the obligations of the contract were not fulfilled. Amorite life came to a center in those fortified cities which, according to the ancient Book of Judges, the Israelite invaders were unable to reduce when they came into Canaan from the wilderness of Arabia.



The principal members of the upper social class among the Amorites were called by the name *baal*. This word means property-owner and slaveholder. It carries with it something of the sense of "big business." *Baal* was a very common word among certain oriental nations. The head of the family was not called the "husband" of his wife, but the *baal* of his woman, because he bought her for money, and she was regarded as his possession. A man could have as many such wives as his financial resources permitted. The *baal*, then, was the legal owner of his women, children, slaves, cattle, houses, lands, etc.; and this highly important word passed over directly into the composite Hebrew language, appearing in the manuscripts of the Bible with the force here indicated. "The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass the stall of his *baal*" (Isa. 1:3).

Among the Amorites, as in the case of the Israelites and other ancient peoples, church and state were one and the same; religion and life were closely identified. The term *baal* was carried straight up from the men of power and applied to the *gods* of the Amorites. The divine Baals of the land of Canaan were deities whose worship centered in the various fortified cities. All the important and solemn things of life—plowing and planting and reaping and selling land, etc.—

were transacted in the name of the Baals. Swearing by the name of Baal meant recognition of the native Amorite ideas and institutions. The Baals were the patrons and protectors of a social system based on land monopoly, slavery, aristocracy, special privilege, and graft.

We now have before us the elements of the early evolution of church and Bible. Israelites plus Amorites equal Hebrews. This formula needs to be burned into our minds with red letters if we are ever to be prepared to understand the mighty religious development which gave rise to the churches around us in the world today. At first glance, the double ancestry of the Hebrew nation appears to have no bearing on the great question of social justice. But when we turn this interesting fact over and examine it from all sides, we find the most remarkable consequences flowing from it.

#### THE HEBREW KINGDOM

The foregoing survey shows that the two principal races which united to form the Hebrew nation were far apart in their social ideals and usages. When some of the Israelites in the hill country of Canaan proposed to establish a government with a king over it, there was opposition to the plan. According to one account, the prophet Samuel, who lived in the hills of Ephraim, warned

the people that if they set up a monarchy it would bring them face to face with the social problem which pressed upon the surrounding nations of the oriental world: The ownership of the soil would concentrate in the hands of a few nobles. There would be a small wealthy, upper class, and a vast lower class living in poverty. The people would be heavily taxed to meet the expenses of the royal government; and the children of the poor would be reduced to slavery (I Sam. 8:11-17). The underlying theme of social justice now begins to emerge clearly into relief.

The earlier days of Samuel's public activity lay within the period of the "Judges." The Israelite clans were living in the hill country of Judah, Ephraim, and Gilead, while the Amorites lived in Jerusalem and other walled cities of the lowlands. The Israelites, on their part, proceeded to form a monarchy by electing as king a certain Saul, the son of Kish. It is to be noticed that Saul's kingdom was merely a fighting organization of hill folk. He had no fortified capital city.

Saul's royal successor, David of Bethlehem, was also an Israelite of the hills; but after the new king had consolidated his power among the highlanders of his own race, he captured and occupied an Amorite fort called "Zion," which dominated the hitherto foreign city of Jerusalem. The king

took wives to himself out of this city, and the fusion of Israelites and Amorites went forward in his reign. The Hebrew race was coming into existence. By the time the half-Israelite Solomon succeeded to the throne, the administrative centers of the new kingdom were established, not only in Jerusalem, but in a number of other Amorite cities which the earlier Israelites had been unable to conquer (I Kings 4:1, 2, 9, 11, 12, 15; cf. Judg. 1:27-33).

The reason why the name "Israel" survived in the Hebrew nation is very simple: The monarchy was founded by highland Israelites, and then extended to include the Amorites of the lowlands. The Amorites themselves, as the Tell-el-Amarna tablets prove, had no national organization in the pre-Israelite period, but only a number of city districts, each worshiping its own local Baal. This condition of things agrees precisely with what we find in the Books of Judges and Samuel. It was the Israelites, the descendants of the desert nomads, who gave political organization to the new Hebrew people. Such being the case, it was but natural that the name of Israel should be applied to the community which arose at the point of assimilation between these two parent races. Properly speaking, there were no "Israelites" after the time of Solomon.

Within a few generations after the establishment of the monarchy, the great mass of the Hebrew people entirely forgot the Amorite side of their ancestry. Presently the mistaken idea became current that the Israelites had actually exterminated the Amorites at the time of the invasion of Canaan. It is here that the writings ascribed to Moses and Joshua have assisted in confusing the minds of subsequent generations. We should carefully remember that the *earliest* Hebrew books are Judges and Samuel, and that the works ascribed to the names of Moses and Joshua were compiled after the Babylonian exile, when the Hebrew nation was no longer in existence, and when its early history was overgrown with a mass of conflicting traditions.

The founding of the Hebrew kingdom by David, not only made the Israelite tradition conspicuous in the new community, but, by the same token, it made the worship of Yahweh the symbol and rallying-point of the whole national movement. Every social group in ancient times had to have a common object of worship. The work of David, in uniting Israelites and Amorites and in defeating their enemies, the Philistines, caused the Hebrew nation to worship Yahweh, the God of David. Thus, we find ourselves looking at the situation once more in a *religious* light; and we

now advance to considerations of the utmost importance.

While the Hebrew people were coming into existence at the point of assimilation between Israelites and Amorites, the social ideas and usages of the parent races continued to prevail in different parts of the country. The inhabitants of the walled cities in the lowlands retained aristocratic institutions, while the farmers and shepherds, living in the hill country and out toward the desert, followed the more primitive, democratic customs. In other words, *while the two original races disappeared within the mass of the new Hebrew kingdom, their opposite points of view remained as distinctions attaching to social classes within the nation.*

This vitality of social ideas and usages had the effect of carrying Amorite Baal-worship and Israelite Yahweh-worship along together in the same stream of national history. A most intensely interesting drama develops before us. Yahweh became the general deity of the nation, while the local Baals remained as the gods of the various districts. And so the "established church" of the Hebrews embraced the worship of many gods. The legal religion of the nation was polytheism.

A highly significant fact calling for notice here is that the Amorite name Baal was even applied to Yahweh himself. Soon after the capture of

Jerusalem, David defeated the Philistines, whereupon he said, "Yahweh hath broken mine enemies before me like the breach of waters. Therefore he called the name of that place *Baal-perazim*" (II Sam. 5:20). This phrase, which means "breakings forth of Baal," was applied to the breaking forth of Yahweh upon the Philistines. The Ark of Yahweh, at this time, was kept in a place called "Baal-Judah" (II Sam. 6:2). One of Saul's sons was called "Esh-baal," and one of his grandsons "Meri-baal" (I Chron. 9:39-40). One of David's captains was named "Baaliah," which means "Yahweh is Baal" (I Chron. 12:5). The application of the term Baal to Yahweh was continued for many generations, as the prophets Hosea and Jeremiah testified (Hos. 2:16, 17; Jer. 23:27).

All the essential factors of one of the most intense and vivid complications in the history of mankind thus appeared in conjunction upon the stage of Hebrew life. In order to appreciate the meaning of the biblical fight for justice, it remains for us only to draw out briefly the developments which unfolded after the rise of the Davidic monarchy.

#### THE HEBREW STRUGGLE

Whether or not Samuel delivered the speech of warning attributed to him in the eighth chap-

ter of the first book that bears his name, the speech condenses the economic phase of Hebrew life within a very small compass: The plain people were heavily taxed and reduced to slavery, while the best lands in the country came into possession of the rich nobles who surrounded the throne. Under the monarchy, indeed, the social problem of wealth and poverty soon overshadowed the nation.

A great revolt against David, in the latter days of his reign, was put down by the help of hired soldiers known as Cherethites, Pelethites, and Gittites (II Sam. 15:18; 17:8; 20:7, 23). It was by the power of these mercenaries that the throne was seized for Solomon (I Kings 1:8, 43, 44). The oppression of the people during the reign of Solomon became so bitter that, when he died, a popular uprising broke out, in which the larger part of the nation cast off the house of David forever, leaving his family a foothold only in Judah, the little kingdom of the south. Subsequently, the people continued to set up and pull down governments. One dynasty after another was elevated to the throne and presently destroyed.

After the people had exhausted themselves in blind revolts, there began to appear among them the most remarkable characters the world has ever seen—the great Hebrew prophets. It should



be noticed particularly that these men came, not from the walled cities which the nation inherited from the Amorite side of its ancestry, but mostly from the highlands and from the wilderness beyond the frontier, where the community reproduced the primitive ideas and customs of the old, nomadic, desert life. The great Elijah was from the hills of Gilead, east of the Jordan. Elisha lived at the village of Abelmeholah, in the highlands of Ephraim. Amos was a shepherd, whose home was at the little hamlet of Tekoa, far up in the wilderness of Judah. Micah lived in the village of Moresheth, in the Judean hills. Jeremiah came from the village of Anathoth, in the northern part of Judah. It was by such men as these that the platform of Hebrew prophecy was constructed. And, parenthetically, it may be well to add here that the prophets were preachers rather than foretellers of the future. The element of prediction was a minor part of their messages.

Amos, Micah, and Isaiah constituted what may be called the "eighth-century Judean school of prophecy." According to their view, the Hebrew problem was very simple: It consisted merely in the breaking of the desert law of brotherhood-justice by a nation which had once followed that law, but which, through perverseness, had turned

aside from the good old paths of the wilderness forefathers. In brief, the people had forsaken the moral customs of Yahweh, and must be recalled to their old allegiance. The nation as a whole had once done right; it now did wrong; it ought to repent and do right again. To the early Judean school, then, the national sin was a purely ethical matter.

These prophets denounced the adding of house to house and field to field. They perceived that land monopoly was crushing out the life of the people. But they failed to see that the problem of their time lay, not merely in moral perversity, but in a collision between two different sorts of legal institutions (democratic and aristocratic), inherited from the double ancestry of the Hebrew nation, and preserved in the form of class distinctions within the community. One of the mistakes of the early Judean prophets, of course, was their persistent application of the term "Israel" to the *Hebrews*. Amos, for instance, thought that his countrymen were all Israelites by descent, and that the *Amorites* had been destroyed, root and branch, at the time of the original invasion by the desert clans (Amos 2:9, 10).

As a consequence, Amos, Micah, and Isaiah failed to raise the question of the Amorite gods. Search their books, and you will find no reference

to the Baals. These prophets not only took the view that the nation was of pure Israelite descent, but they were no doubt blinded by the apparently innocent custom, dating from David's time, of applying the Amorite name Baal to Yahweh himself. The worship of Yahweh and the worship of the Baals had now gone forward side by side for several generations; and by this time the two were pretty well mixed and confused. The Hebrew prophets were, indeed, confronted by a situation which the human mind had never before encountered; and they were struggling in the dark. A very complicated social, ethical, and religious problem was raised by the evolution of the Hebrew people; and the men who undertook to solve it were slow in stating the case clearly.

A firmer grasp on the essential factors in the situation was gained by the prophet Hosea, whose interest centered, not in Judah, but in *Ephraim*—the region of the so-called "Ten Tribes," which lay north of Jerusalem and composed the larger part of the nation. With revolutionary boldness he insisted that the Amorite term Baal should no longer be applied to the national deity of the Hebrews. Speaking in the name of Yahweh, he says, "Thou shalt no more call me Baal, for I will take away the names of the Baals out of her mouth, and they shall no more be remembered by

their name" (Hos. 2:16, 17). This prophet urges with strong emphasis the distinction between the deity whose worship the Israelites brought with them from the wilderness, and the Baal-gods that have come down from the Amorites. He declares that it is not the Baals who cause the crops to spring up, and who give grain, oil, and wine to the people, but Yahweh himself. Hosea labored to detach Yahweh from the Baals in the minds of the people; and his work represents a new stage in the evolution of Bible religion. It is very instructive to notice the differences between his book and the writings of Amos, Micah, and Isaiah, the Judean prophets already mentioned.

Hosea's thought, however, is obscure as compared with the message of one who preached a century later in Judah. Jeremiah stands at the very summit and crown of Hebrew prophecy, and brings us out of the tangle and confusion into clear daylight. He refers to the fact that earlier generations of Hebrews had forgotten the "name" of Yahweh "because of Baal" (Jer. 23:27); and, in the teaching of this remarkable prophet, "walking after other gods" becomes the figure for breaking Yahweh's law of brotherhood-justice which prevailed in the wilderness among the nomadic Israelite clans. According to his view, then, the conflict of social usages in the Hebrew nation is

to be treated as a rivalry between Yahweh and Baal. He states plainly, as no prophet before him had done, that the struggle between justice and injustice, freedom and slavery, common rights to the earth and private land monopoly, is really a contest in which Yahweh appears as the champion of the people against the Baals who seek to enthrall them.

We have seen that the warning attributed to Samuel refers to the concentration of landed property in the hands of the wealthy, and we have heard the prophets crying out against the adding of house to house and field to field. This process was accomplished, not as a bare piece of robbery, but as a *legal* matter, through the machinery of the *courts*, and under the sanction of *religion*. The dreadful, agonizing business of depriving a man of his ancestral inheritance, because of his failure to pay interest or principal of a loan, was conducted in the name of that ancient Baal-cult which was bound up with aristocracy, private land monopoly, and graft.

Jeremiah goes into the heart of this tragedy in Hebrew social life to get his most emphatic figure. The concentration of property made a very deep impression upon him, as it did on all the prophets. The masses were taught to swear in the name of Baal by men of wealth and power, who "touched

the inheritance of the people," plucking up the poor from their homes and casting them out. Startling indeed is the black threat made by Jeremiah in the name of Yahweh: Unless the nation cease to swear in the name of Baal, then, even as the poor are plucked off their land, *so will Yahweh pluck up the entire nation and hurl it away* (Jer. 11:17; 12:14-17).

In the generation before Jeremiah, a king by the name of Manasseh had reigned in Jerusalem. According to the Book of Kings, this monarch reared up altars for Baal and acted like an Amorite (II Kings 21:3, 11). But during the early life of Jeremiah there was a great reaction against the policies of Manasseh, the Baal-worshipping monarch. The people of the country districts rose up, and put a new king, Josiah, on the throne (II Kings 21:24). Under this king a reformation took place. The vessels that were made for Baal-worship were brought forth from the temple, carried out beyond the city to the Kidron valley, and there burned; while those who offered incense to Baal were put down (I Kings 23:4, 5). Nevertheless, old practices and ideas were so powerful that Baalism presently came back in full force. It was in the midst of this Baalistic revival that Jeremiah's preaching campaign was conducted. His denunciations were

more bitter and severe than those of the earlier prophets. For saying that the temple would be destroyed and the city of Jerusalem laid waste he was charged with high treason and brought to trial for his life.

It was one of the most thrilling scenes in Hebrew history: Jeremiah on the one side; his accusers on the other; the judges in solemn session at the entry of the temple gate; an excited mass of people watching the progress of the case. The democratic, or popular, party was so strong, and the prophet had so many friends, that the judges did not venture to condemn him, but ordered his release on the technical ground that, whether he was right or wrong, he had spoken in good faith in the name of Yahweh, the national deity (Jer., chap. 26).

#### TRIUMPH OF MONOTHEISM

Jeremiah's prediction came true. Already the Ephraimites, to whom Hosea preached in vain, had been taken away into an exile from which they were never to return—the so-called "Ten Lost Tribes." And now the little kingdom of Judah was conquered; and most of its inhabitants were carried away into the great Babylonian captivity. The temple at Jerusalem was destroyed, and the city was laid in ruins.

Thus Jeremiah was vindicated. Baalism perished forever; but faith in Yahweh survived. The force which destroyed the worship of many gods, and enthroned the One God, was the wrath of the plain people as expressed in political and religious uprisings, and in the preaching of the great Hebrew prophets; while the awful catastrophe of the Babylonian exile drove the lesson home for all time. *And so we see how the victory of monotheism was the first great triumph of democracy in the history of the world.*

Conventional interpreters of the Bible have led us to suppose that the struggle between the worship of the One God and the worship of many gods was a kind of theological, or philosophical, or metaphysical, contest. On the right side were the wise, enlightened people, who believed that only *one* deity had a real, true, actual existence; while on the wrong side were the ignorant, benighted, foolish people, who believed in the real, true, actual existence of a lot of imaginary, fictitious gods.

But as a matter of fact, the campaign against the "false" gods was very different from this. In reality, it was a war on graft and monopoly. This is made clear by a great mass of conclusive evidence. The false gods were false because they stood for injustice and a false moral system.



Yahweh was "true" because he stood for the idea of justice and a true moral system. It is not that the Bible offers a set of perfect moral rules applicable to modern conditions; but rather that the fight for monotheism was an item in the progressive emancipation of the race. On the whole, Baalism looked *backward*; while the Yahweh religion, as interpreted by the great prophets, looked *forward*.

Religion, on its human side, is a matter of unfolding spiritual perception. On the other side of the process, the Divine Spirit, which guides the circling stars and planets, made use of Hebrew evolution to lift the hearts of men up to the exalted platform of faith in a true and holy God, whose laws of justice and righteousness, when discovered and applied in human life, are seen to be the expression of his character. The laws and conditions of morality are as truly an expression of the nature of the universe in which we live as are the laws of chemistry and physics and astronomy; and they are equally matters of gradual discovery.

This, of course, is a new way of looking at the Bible. But it is the way of modern scholarship. It represents an angle of approach and a method of interpretation which are not yet familiar to the people at large, but whose presuppositions have already struck root in the popular mind.

Great multitudes today are already prepared for the new economics and the new spirituality of the Bible. Modern scholarship offers the only method which will give the Bible continued hold on the world and insure the religious appeal of Scripture to the progressive intellect.

We can see the higher type of religion being produced, or created, before our eyes on the pages of the Bible. Hebrew prophecy got a long start in the primitive, nomadic ideal of brotherhood-justice. Hebrew religion itself was evolved through the play of prophetic convictions against the evils of Baalism, action and reaction succeeding each other until at last the prophets had climbed up to the idea of Yahweh as a Redeemer and Savior from injustice and sin.

This, however, is only the beginning of the story. But now that we have got our bearings and entered on the path of a new interpretation, the other chapters will unroll more quickly before us.

## JUSTICE *VERSUS* DOGMA

We have now surveyed the first big chapter in the evolution of the *church*. Out of the terrible struggle with heathenism the One God emerged victorious over his pagan rivals. So long as there were many gods claiming allegiance there was no chance to focus the minds of the people on one principle. The rise of monotheism was, therefore, a decided gain, because it concentrated public opinion along the same channels of thought. But as soon as monotheism was established, a new struggle arose over the question, How is the One God to be served?

When the exiled Judeans were at length permitted by their foreign rulers to return, Jerusalem was rebuilt and Hebrew nationality was re-established under the form of "Judaism." The name "Jew" is derived by contraction from Judah, the southern district, or tribe, of the Hebrews. Jewish history begins after the Babylonian captivity; and it revolves around the religion of the One God. The Jews, alone among the nations of antiquity, bore witness to a single Divine Principle worthy of recognition by man. Alone amid the darkness of heathenism, the rem-

nant of the Hebrews became a light to the Gentiles, that they might be for salvation to the end of the earth (Isa. 49:6).

Monotheism has, indeed, spread from the "Holy Land" all over the world—not figuratively, but literally. Instruction has gone forth from Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. The Hebrew Scriptures are held sacred by an ever-increasing host numbered in the hundreds of millions. Yet, wherever monotheism has gone, there has been a struggle over the question *how* the One God should be worshiped. From Judaism have come both Roman Catholicism and Protestantism; and within these denominations the old Hebrew struggle for justice has repeated itself under a new form.

Two classes have appeared in all churches alike. On the one hand, there have been the dogmatists—those who have wanted to persuade or compel people to hold a certain "correct," or "orthodox," belief and ritual. In order that the world shall be saved, everybody must believe the right way and observe the right forms of worship. This is the primary and fundamental thing in religion, according to the dogmatists. But on the other hand, there have been the moralists—those who have insisted that God's fundamental demand is for justice and righteousness. Dogmatism has

always tended to be allied with wealth, and has generally frowned upon "agitation"; while moralism has always tended to raise the question of rich and poor.

Under Judaism, for instance, the priests and rabbis have been as earnestly devoted to the worship of One God as were the great Hebrew prophets before the Babylonian captivity. But at the same time orthodox Judaism has tended strongly to identify religion with correct theological beliefs and ritual observances. The danger that lay before Judaism—and to which it largely succumbed—was the temptation to oppose the worship of "other gods" without fighting the injustice with which other gods were identified by the Hebrew prophets. In Judaism (as in Romanism and Protestantism) there has always been a tendency to associate the clerical order in various ways with the wealthy.

It is not at all difficult to see the place of Jesus in this evolution. As a plain matter of history, the priesthood and the wealthy were against him, while the common people were for him. He pointed out that the Pharisees and scribes were active religious workers, took front seats in church, made long prayers, and tithed mint, anise, and cumin, but that they left undone the "weightier

matters of the law." And what were these weightier, more important, matters? Chief among them was *justice* (Matt. 23:23; Mark 12:32-40; Luke 11:42).

Toward the upper classes, Jesus took the tone of the Hebrew prophets. In the same way that the prophets declaimed against the rich for adding house to house and field to field, so Jesus emphasized the land problem when he denounced the wealthy for devouring widows' houses. The scribes and Pharisees, he said, cleansed the outside of the cup; but within, it was full of extortion. A rich man would find it as difficult to get into the Kingdom of God as a camel to squeeze through a place too narrow for him. The gospels give clear evidence that the religious movement centering around the person of Jesus got its early driving power through the economic protest of poverty against wealth.

That Jesus continued the work of such leaders as Amos, Isaiah, and Jeremiah is shown, not only by his frequent quotations from them, but in the popular recognition of him as one of the Hebrew prophets risen from the dead (Mark 8:28; Luke 9:19). In his denunciation of the scribes and Pharisees he charges them with being the "sons," or successors, of those that slew the prophets (Matt. 23:31). The chief priests and leading

citizens were slow in destroying him for fear of the people (Luke 19:47, 48; 20:19).

It is by one of the ironies of history that the Jewish race has been blamed for the murder of Jesus. He was killed, not by the Jews as a people, but by the *privileged* classes, acting in concert with the Roman conquerors of Judah. Himself a Jew, he had more friends than enemies among his own people; his disciples were of his own race; the common people, who heard him gladly, were of his own stock; and the apostle Paul, the missionary to the Gentiles, was a "Hebrew of the Hebrews" (Phil. 3:5).

No specific program of economic, political, and social reform can be found in the New Testament. Modern radicals who seek to buttress their programs by an appeal to the Gospels really weaken their case. The New Testament continues the struggle for justice, which began far back in Hebrew times. This biblical movement, in all its aspects, raises the social problem without finding a definite, concrete *solution* for the problem. It is for us to discover, within the terms of Jesus' doctrine of the brotherhood of man and the fatherhood of God, the proper method of handling the question of justice. But it is a mistake to seek the enlistment of church or Bible in behalf of any particular scheme of reform.

## SOCIAL PROBLEM OBSCURED

While the early appeal of the Christian movement was to the lower classes, a change began to come over the new religion the farther it spread in the world. The apostle Paul defended chattel slavery, and advised slaves who had embraced Christianity to be submissive to their masters and content with their lot. But as the process of church organization went forward in Greek and Roman territory, the ecclesiastical offices and machinery fell more and more into the hands of the wealthy. The Epistle of James warns the church against giving place and power to the wealthy man who comes into their assembly wearing a gold ring and fine clothing. "Do not the rich oppress you, and themselves drag you before the judgment seats?" (Jas. 2:1-6).

The suppression of democratic life and the spread of aristocratic influence in the early church explain the rise and luxuriant growth of dogma. The great theological controversies did not begin while ecclesiastical affairs were controlled by the plain people. Not until the church had come under the sway of wealth did it develop a keen interest in dogma. Then came the age of the "church councils." These meetings, or conventions, did not spring from the masses. They were engineered by emperors, bishops, and priests



who were in league with the upper classes. One of the most famous ecclesiastical agents of aristocracy was that prince of orthodox theologians, Augustine, whose life overlapped the fourth and fifth centuries after Christ. Augustine's work did more than that of any ancient churchman to establish the reign of dogma, obscure the social problem, and bury the struggle for justice.

It is not for us here to investigate the question whether the rise of dogma was necessary to the order and progress of the world. That is a matter by itself. What we are emphasizing in this connection is a fact about which there can be no dispute, namely, that in Greek and Roman Catholicism, as in Judaism, the problem of justice was thrust into the background by the ascendancy of wealth in the church. The priesthood allied itself with the rich, and spent much of its time in theological discussions, arguments, and controversies which turned the attention of the people away from the great themes that were put in the foreground by Jesus and the Hebrew prophets.

Augustine, the dogmatist of Christianity, was partly contemporaneous with Chrysostom, the last eminent preacher of justice in the ancient world. Chrysostom was appointed bishop of Constantinople by the emperor Arcadius, and he proved to be a most extraordinary and unusual

churchman. Preaching after the manner of the Hebrew prophets, he dwelt upon the enormous accumulations of property in the hands of the upper classes, and pointed out how land monopoly closed the doors of industrial opportunity in the face of the plain people. Deposed from his office and driven from the city, he died in exile.

Dogma was triumphant all through the so-called Middle Ages, during the long period in which the barbarian tribes of Europe were slowly evolving into the nations of modern history. During this time, the leading priests and bishops were associated closely with the nobility in the various European countries; and the bishops themselves became, in fact, great landlords, holding vast estates, more or less tax-free, in the name of the church. The hard old Roman law of private land monopoly was carried from Italy over Europe as an aid to the upper classes in controlling the people; and in this legal process the Roman ecclesiastics were on the side of the aristocracy.

The beginnings of the Protestant Reformation can be discerned in statutes passed by the English Parliament against the accumulation of tax-free land by the church. Blackstone, in his famous *Commentaries on the Laws of England*, considers the subject in some detail (Book II, chap. xviii).

The controversy around the land question brought into prominence an English Roman Catholic priest by the name of John Wicliffe, who has been called the "Morning Star of the Reformation." As Macaulay Trevelyan points out, Wicliffe's agitation of the land question came *before* his break with the orthodox Roman theology. His economic liberalism preceded and led the way to his theological heresy. Bearing this in mind, it is worth while to read a passage from his writings:

Secular lordships, which clergymen have full falsely, against God's law, and spend them so wickedly, should be given wisely by the king and wise lords to poor gentlemen, who would justly govern the people, and maintain the land against enemies; and then might our land be stronger by many thousand men of arms than it is now, without any new cost of lords, or taxation of the poor commons, and be discharged of great heavy rent, and wicked customs brought up by covetous clergy, and of many taxes and extortions, by which they be now cruelly pillaged and robbed.<sup>1</sup>

The Reformation in Germany was closely connected with uprisings of the peasants against the oppressions of landlordism. Public lands, formerly belonging to all, were seized by the nobility. The Romanized law courts, controlled by the aristocracy, dealt out injustice to the poor. The grievances of the people were stated in many

<sup>1</sup> *Select English Works of Wiclif*, Oxford, 1869-71, III, 216, 217.

political and economic platforms, the most famous of which were the "Twelve Articles." This document was publicly approved by Martin Luther, who said that if the land brought forth as many coins as ears of corn, the profit would not go to the farmer who labored on the land, but to the landlord who lived off the farmer.

On its economic side, the Reformation confiscated the estates of the Roman Catholic church. These lands, however, were not given to the people but to the Protestant aristocracy. As the historian Motley observes, "The religious reformation in every land of Europe derived a portion of its strength from the opportunity it afforded to potentates and great nobles for helping themselves to church property." As a rule, the landed magnates were the organizers of the early Reformation churches; and from what we have already learned about the influence of wealth in Judaism and Romanism, we can understand why it is that Protestantism, during most of its history, has been preoccupied with dogma rather than with justice and the social problem.

Orthodox Reformation theology is an aristocratic product. The leading Protestant writers on religious doctrine were either men of independent economic position, or were financed by the well-to-do. At the time when their systems

were produced, there was no science of history; and hence there was no possibility that Protestant theologians could receive the Bible as it is now understood by historical and sociological scholars. This consideration applies, not only to the doctrinal teachers of Protestantism, but to the middlemen of the church—the preachers and evangelists who sat at the feet of doctrinal professors and carried the gospel to the multitude.

Probably the nineteenth century will be recognized as the epoch in which the struggle between dogma and morality reached an issue. The external conditions of religious life underwent a profound modification during that period. While previous changes in religion had gone forward under the *union* of church and state, the victorious party in theological conflicts using public authority to back its claims, the *separation* of church and state now took away the powerful support of government from theological doctrines, and at once placed the evolution of religion within the sphere of private, and relatively peaceful, discussion and research.

The nineteenth century challenged, in a final and conclusive way, the authority of the clerical class, which hitherto, among Jews, Roman Catholics, and Protestants, had enjoyed a monopoly of doctrinal teaching, and had consequently occupied

a mediatorial position between God and the people. Theological controversies that had once blazed afar now died away; and the life of the churches began to gravitate insensibly around the principle of morality as the fundamental consideration in religion.

Few realized what had happened. Many lamented the shifting of ancient landmarks and became so perplexed that all religion seemed lost. In reality, another significant era in spiritual experience was closed. Dogmatism had gone the way of the heathen deities; and the religion of the One God had at length come out upon the high ground of justice and righteousness.

But this is not the end of the story. For today, in the twentieth century, we are in the midst of another crisis. The air is filled with strange battle cries; novel issues are taking form; and we are living in a new chapter of religious evolution which grows naturally out of the developments of the past.

## JUSTICE *VERSUS* INDIVIDUALISM

Plain, old-fashioned individual righteousness—or social justice? The issue of our time is not yet understood by the majority. But increasing millions are on the alert; and every day brings the merits of public questions more clearly into view. We are in a kind of nightmare, passing through the agony of a transition which is confusing and painful. We hear more and more about “sociology” and the “social gospel.” These terms excite distrust and aversion in some quarters; but they bring cheer to a growing host.

The problem of today is both religious and secular. Not only does it affect the church, but it profoundly stirs the world at large. The social awakening is the paramount fact of our age; but it is viewed from different angles inside and outside the church. The situation amid which we live comes logically out of the long evolution sketched in the foregoing chapters, and can be understood to advantage only as it is interpreted from the historical standpoint.

Having at length reached a center on moral ground, the church is entering upon a struggle

over the meaning of morality itself. What are "justice" and "righteousness"? These terms are large and important; but what do they really and actually mean? Approaching the matter from a religious point of view, we ask, What does God want when he demands moral rectitude? This question, indeed, raises the problem of God's nature, and carries us into the field of liberal theology. But from the purely secular standpoint the issue turns around the struggle between those who hold that the world is to be saved by personal righteousness and those who contend for "social justice." Yet the secular and religious problems are, in fact, one and the same.

When we are facing the wrongness in human life, our first and most natural tendency is to seek its cause in personal sins and shortcomings. We are prone to believe that moral evil arises only from the bad will of sinners. Most of us are keen to find some person or persons whom we can blame for something. Hence, we have done a great deal in trying to reform, correct, improve, convert, and save *individuals*.

In this common tendency, we find the secret of the older church gospel of personal salvation. Let the sinner mend his ways and do right. Let everyone be good. Then, when everybody is converted, the world will be saved. According



to this view, God is looked upon as demanding only a narrow, conventional sort of rectitude, which can be quietly achieved by the private citizen. The problem of sin is to be solved either by the self-reformation of the sinner, or by a supernatural act of divine grace—in any event, morality is a purely individual matter, secured by a change in the sinner himself.

This gospel of salvation is “orthodox”; but it is not *biblical*. It does not bring into view those problems of wealth and poverty and land monopoly which Jesus and the Hebrew prophets raised. A conventional, orthodox evangelist or preacher, of the Moody type, urging sinners to repentance, does not bring up the social problem of class relations between rich and poor. Religion with him is only a personal thing. And while, in a sense, he may be right in saying that the biblical treatment of sin is also personal, this consideration does not affect our point. For, if modern orthodoxy and the ancient religion of the Bible are the same, why, then, have not orthodox preachers raised the questions emphasized by the prophets and by Jesus? As Bishop Charles D. Williams, of the Episcopal diocese of Michigan, writes, the church “preaches, for the most part, a narrow and petty round of ethics and the minor moralities of purely personal conduct, respectabilities,

good form, technical pieties, and ecclesiastical proprieties.”<sup>1</sup>

The reason for this is that all orthodox theology was developed under the influence of the upper social classes, which, as a rule, have not wanted the subject of property to be brought into any sort of connection with religion. The individualistic tendency in morals has coincided with the self-interest of the dominant class in society. Nevertheless, this overshadowing of the social problem by orthodoxy has not been due to some deep conspiracy between the church and the wealthy. The situation has grown out of normal, sincere, human tendencies. When the late J. P. Morgan, for instance, entertained certain bishops of the Episcopal church, and invited them to travel in his private car, he was not consciously bribing them to shut their eyes to the social problem and preach a gospel of personal salvation. For both Morgan and the bishops were sincere individualists and were raised in that way of thinking. All talk of a “conspiracy” between wealth and the church is beside the mark. The evolution does not evolve in that *way*.

But over against the narrow, selfish doctrine of personal salvation there has lately come a broader vision of redemption. The church, in

<sup>1</sup> *American Magazine*, June, 1911.

response to the logic of its origin, is returning gradually and steadily to its biblical foundation. The new biblical scholarship, firmly established in the leading divinity schools, now shapes the views of many thousands of clergymen, and greatly influences the laity. Present-day preaching begins to revolve about the moral questions of wealth and poverty which play so commanding a part in the Bible. The tones of the Hebrew prophets and of Jesus are beginning to be heard in the pulpit.

And yet, the issue is not clearly before us. We have hardly adjusted ourselves to the modern method of biblical interpretation before we are called upon to make terms with the "social awakening." Why must these movements crowd each other so closely? The answer is that they are not independent facts, but elements of the same vast upheaval which reverberates all through civilization today. The new conviction of our age is that injustice comes, not merely from personal sin, but from defective social arrangements. The established "system" in which we live not only hampers the individual in his outreach for morality, but the tragedy of it is that if we all followed the dictates of righteousness in our own private lives the defective social system would remain the same. In other words, we cannot

have justice on a foundation of merely personal morality. This is the new radical insight.

The antagonism between the claims of individual morality and social righteousness becomes more pronounced as we move onward. Discussion grows more vigorous and heated; but still, the majority are not certain about the nature of the issue. Let us take a very simple and homely illustration: You are on a crowded car, hanging to a strap; and as the car jerks along a fellow-passenger accidentally steps on your shoe. Your first and most natural tendency is to blame him personally. He is careless; and he ought to be more thoughtful and considerate. But on second thought you know that his conduct with reference to you is determined, in part at least, by defective social arrangements. It is possibly true that, with more care, he might not have interfered with your comfort. Nevertheless, you know that there is another problem here. No matter how careful everybody in the car is, the trouble will never be set right until the external, physical relations between the passengers have been reformed, and they all have room and a chance to be decent.

Carry this figure over into civilization as a whole. We are all journeying through life on a conveyance known as the earth. Those who

believe in personal salvation as the only remedy for the ills of mankind exhort their fellow-passengers to be careful, kind, considerate, righteous, moral, and just. According to this view, the problem of the world is entirely spiritual and *internal*. The remedy for all evils in society is to be found in the betterment of the individual. But, on the other hand, the social reformer calls attention to external conditions and laws which profoundly affect the relations of people to each other, and which hamper and restrict them in their efforts to be just.

Today we are in the midst of a sharp reaction against the old, conventional individualism. Even those who do not see the meaning of the new tidal movement in thought are constrained by it. Programs looking toward economic and political reform are coming rapidly into favor. Socialism already numbers millions of adherents, and has enlisted beneath its banner many clergymen who have definitely and finally broken with the orthodox teaching of a merely personal salvation as the only cure for the world's troubles. Another interesting reform is well represented by the clergyman whom we quoted above, Bishop Charles D. Williams, of Michigan, who for years has advocated the single tax on land values. His rather uncomplimentary characterization of

the older ecclesiastical doctrine of salvation proceeds from the standpoint of the single tax philosophy, which he holds with deep religious fervor.

When we look around us at the changes which have taken place in the last few years, it is indeed surprising to see how the older, orthodox idea of morality is disappearing, and how the social problems raised by the Bible are coming steadily to the front. This is not simply a change in the field of organized religion. It is a development in which the church is involved as part of a larger transformation extending all through the social fabric. The long delay in the emergence of the social point of view seems hard to explain at first; but the reason for the vigorous persistence of individualism down to the present generation is very simple.

We saw that the rise of Protestantism was complicated by the pressure of the land question. The masses of the people in Europe have been for centuries under the rule of a landed nobility, whose tyranny was one of the chief causes leading to the settlement of the Western Hemisphere. When European immigrants first reached America, they found a vast expanse of cheap and fertile soil over which no hereditary aristocracy held sway. There was enough land for all; and if the

settler was not content with his lot in the place where he happened to be, he could move elsewhere and make a new start.

In the presence of opportunities for making a living such as had never been seen before, the natural individualism of the human mind has been developed in America to a high degree. For several generations there were no very poor and no very rich, while the problem of a large unemployed class was unknown. In the rush of economic progress, America paid little attention to anything but the material side of life. American religious, political, and economic ideas have been essentially those of Europe transplanted to the New World. America's tradition of liberty has grown and flourished, not because of any mental superiority over the European peoples, but because of *cheap land*, which, until recently, has made it possible for millions to work out their destiny independent of an upper class which holds the soil by hereditary right. Not only has the presence of industrial opportunity given the plain people a chance, and thus made America individualistic; but the Western Hemisphere itself has acted as a kind of safety-valve for Europe, drawing off the discontented and explosive elements, and partially relieving the social problem in the Old World.

During the last half-century, however, conditions in the Western Hemisphere have greatly changed. Although there is enough land in America to provide opportunities for many times its present population, this land is held out of use at rising prices far beyond the reach of the plain people. Our fiscal methods, invented by the aristocracy of Europe, lay heavy taxes upon the actual *use* and improvement of the earth, while at the same time putting so light a burden upon the practice of holding the earth *idle*, that speculators can afford to withdraw the larger part of the continent from immediate productive service. Industrial opportunities of all kinds are now greatly restricted. The independent farming class, which once characterized the United States, is melting away. Young people in the agricultural districts, being unable to buy land, are thus forced to start in life as renters. Hence, farm tenantry is increasing by leaps and bounds.

That America is fast reproducing the social problems of Europe is proved by the United States Industrial Commission in its report to Congress. Indeed, common observation shows that property is concentrating in fewer and fewer hands, that clashes between working people and their employers are becoming more frequent, that great combinations are tightening their grip on the



industrial field, and that the cost of living has been going up fast. In view of these conditions, the old cry for a purely personal morality loses much of its force. Charity organization stands hopeless before the swelling tide of poverty and crime. The people at large are more and more conscious of the social problem; but public opinion has not yet been able to crystallize around comprehensive plans of reform.

Now that the social problem is coming into the foreground of religion, it is clear that if we think of God as demanding only *personal* righteousness, then religion at once becomes a force to be wielded by conservatives who seek to turn the people's minds away from great public issues. If justice be only a matter of narrow, individual rectitude, then the church becomes a rock of defense for the interests of political and economic reaction.

But, on the other hand, if righteousness be something more and greater than individualism, then the moral law strikes with swift logic into the social structure of civilization. And in the same way that God has written his laws into the physical universe, leaving them to be discovered and applied by man, *so there must be a divine law of justice written into the very substance and constitution of human society, awaiting discovery and*

*application.* Social evils persist because we have not found out the natural laws of community life.

The religious and social struggle of our day is virtually a contest between two Gods, in which the war of Jehovah and Baal is fought over again within the terms of modern experience. The Individualist God stands for a narrow, selfish conception of duty and conduct. The social God stands for a wide-reaching, altruistic ideal of divine fatherhood and human brotherhood, slowly attained through the lessons of history. Which of these ideals is in harmony with the fundamental nature of things? Which God shall unfurl his banner over the advancing host of civilization?

If the issue is to be decided in favor of the social gospel, organized religion will not thereby stand committed to any particular scheme of social reform. Church members may do as they please in regard to such matters. But the church itself must provide common ground where the people may find inspiration to service, and where civic righteousness may be considered from all points of view in a spirit of kindly fraternalism.

That the story of religion, as told in this little book, has largely turned around problems which are spoken of as "materialistic" we would not attempt to deny. But the question arises, Can

the supreme purpose of human history be simply the development of a just, social system, in which the good things of this world are more fairly distributed? Is the paramount object of life the mere getting of material justice—the mere solving of those economic problems which figure so conspicuously in human existence? If so, why does justice wait, as the centuries roll by? And what of the generations that come and go, and the millions who perish in darkness along the way?

No; the fundamental purpose of life must go beyond these things. The struggle for justice is but one phase of a still wider struggle which covers life as a whole, and which is the condition of every achievement. Our present existence itself—with its brevity and its unsatisfied longing—suggests that life must have a transcendent meaning which embraces within its mighty scope all struggles of the past, the present, and the future. This consideration takes us at once into the spiritual realm. Our life here can have no meaning for us unless it be a fraction of immortality.

Standing amid the clamor and confusion of the present age, and looking back over the road we have traveled, we see the Bible and the church coming into view along the line of conflict between democracy and aristocracy. The progress of religion moves across the centuries through the

din of warfare between despotism and freedom: first, the struggle of the One God against the false gods of graft and special privilege; secondly, the struggle as to how the One God shall be served, whether by dogma and ritual or by justice and righteousness; thirdly, the struggle now going on around the question whether we shall interpret righteousness from the individual or the social standpoint. There can be no doubt how the present struggle will end. The social gospel will triumph; and the Bible, as explained by scientific scholarship, will stand at the center of the greatest movement for justice and freedom that the world has ever seen.



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